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Chapter Two

THE SNOWBALL STATE

1. Manipulation 2. Age-sets 3. Officers of State 4. Continually segmenting systems 5. Lineage systems compared 6. Splitting the State 7. Stability

1. *Manipulation*

In our first chapter we outlined some of the more significant events in Ngoni history prior to the arrival of Europeans. In this chapter we shall examine the political system within which these events took place. It is not the task of social analysis to determine why these or any other events occurred. What we shall attempt is a discussion of how they occurred, and what were the principal social relations involved in them.

Most of the incidents referred to in the first chapter concerned the State as a whole or the royal family. Nevertheless, when we begin to consider the conditions under which the State endured we have to discuss the social position of ordinary men and women within the State. For the Ngoni State held together as an organized social group, and on occasion failed to hold together, not merely because Zwangendaba was a good leader or his sons quarrelsome or his brothers ambitious, or because his people were bound by custom and knew no better, but also, and in our view mainly, because the State was a viable social entity in its time and place. The arrangement of people into segments and age-sets was not a mere formal and static division, but a means whereby a motley heterogeneous collection of individuals was converted into an organized society with agreed aims. The structure of the State had rules; in other words there was regularity in its social processes. Yet it was a structure which, within these rules, could be manipulated. The structure could be, and was, utilized by individuals for the realization of their private ends at the expense of others as well as providing for the common good. This is probably true of all social systems. We shall begin our analysis by examining the ways in which this manipulation was carried out.

In most societies, from the simplest system of hunting bands to the complex societies of the modern world, one of the most significant sets of rights are those relating to fixed natural resources. The structure of rights in land provides a key to the structure of society.

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to which she had belonged before her marriage, and in particular sent some of her children to her parents to be cared for until adolescence. In this way a web of affinal ties was built up, cutting across both the residential and age-set systems and acting against the fissile tendencies in the former.[67]

The ties that bound a man to his age-mates and to his matrilateral kin cut across those linking him to his lord and to his dependants. Nevertheless, it seems probable that even without this arrangement of cross-cutting ties, the segmentary system itself was not easily fissile. The State as a whole was primarily held together by its enemies, the external enemies who made it unsafe for small bodies of Ngoni to venture across the no-man's-land on their own, and the internal rivals who competed for the Paramount Chief's favour and who bided their time until they could lead off their major segments as independent states. The flexibility of the system allowed men to achieve power within it, and provided a way of balancing the interests of different groups, as well as making possible the few instances of fission that did occur. The Paramount Chief was powerful, not only because of his mystical attributes and of the military successes of his people, but because he was the government. Through him the common interests of the tribe as a whole were expressed in an organized manner as against the interests of minority groups. Despite its segmentary form, Ngoni society was a State.

In later years two changes took place which increased the stability of the State, at least from a short-term point of view. In the first place, the external environment altered due to the penetration into the central African hinterland by Arabs, Portuguese and British. With this topic we shall deal in Chapter III. The second change, which seems to have taken place among the Ngoni of northern Nyasaland, was in the internal organization of the State. In that particular group, neighbouring tribes were brought under subjection as political groups, not as individuals, and the conquered peoples were either allowed to retain their own chiefs as subordinate rulers or else were attached in large batches to various important headquarters. A distinction emerged between the aristocracy and the conquered peoples, and the army was no longer simply the aggregation of age-sets but included quasi-professionals supplied by a near-by unconquered Cewa chief Mwase Kasungu, who were armed with guns. Similar changes may well have taken place among the Ngoni groups in Tanganyika, who were more closely involved with the slave trade to the coast

[67] See the discussion of affinal linking in my *Marriage*, pp. 10-11.

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687 kind are referred to the Administration, it may sometimes act in the
648 way desired by the chief and his lieutenants. Thus a chief once discovered his wife in bed with a lover. The man was eventually caught, and there were some who urged that he be hanged right away, for no one would tell the Administration about the matter. However, more cautious counsels prevailed, the incident was
[684] referred to the Administration, and the man was sentenced, in accordance with the wishes of the chiefs and their lieutenants, to three months' imprisonment. On his release, he was escorted from Ngoniland by a chief. Later the man returned, only to be driven out again. The Administration is concerned with upholding the
[696] position of chiefs, and in situations of this kind may regard, say, adultery with a chief's wife as more heinous that with a commoner's wife. On the other hand, the Administration cannot be relied on to give its support automatically, and for this reason chiefs and lieutenants may decide to act without reference to it. The Administration has even on occasion awarded damages to a commoner against the Paramount Chief.

It is perhaps significant that a minor chief whose county con-
634 tained a comparatively large number of villages from the segments of other counties and whose claims to the county chieftainship was disputed decided to hold a meeting to discuss county affairs not at his court or at his village but at the capital of the county. He may have hoped to quell dissension by emphasizing the links with the pre-conquest past shared by the majority of his people.

Now that chiefs and others have begun building in burnt
344 brick, it may be that newly acceded chiefs may not find it so easy
182 to found their own villages. At the same time the policy of building
361 other public buildings in brick, such as treasuries and the proposed welfare halls, in the vicinity of existing courts, may give increased importance to the Native Authority centre. Already there have been one or two attempts at opening shops near the courts to cater for the needs of litigants, and it seems likely that the effective social centre of the county will in future be the site of the Native Authority rather than the capital village or the home of the chief.

8. *Politics and the courts*

The day-to-day work of the court takes up much of the time of
692 chiefs, assessors, and senior lieutenants of the chief. General discussion of Ngoni law lies outside the particular theme of this book, but we are here concerned with the courts in so far as they form part of the political system of the tribe. That there is a close connexion

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were worn by hanging on the shoulder or neck. The bulls which were killed were called *izinkunzi za impi*, bulls of the army. The man who wore the horns and danced with them was known as a man of valour.

Often the Paramount called the men who had shown valour on many occasions to come to him. When he did so he first of all searched for a fine skin and called a man who was good at cutting out a shield. When the shield was ready it was given to the famous warrior. When he received it he began to dance with the shield while the Paramount and the people there saluted him with praises for his valour. The people in the kraal were told to greet the Paramount's hero and beat on their shields. That dancing was a dance of thanks to the Paramount.

Organization of Warfare

Cibambo's text brings out a number of points which emphasize that the organization for war was integral to the whole structure of the Ngoni kingdoms and to the peoples living within the kingdoms. We shall concentrate in this chapter on the political implications of the organization of warfare, and chiefly on the part played by the Paramount and his officers of state. The entire war organization was centred in the person and office of the Paramount. He was the commander-in-chief of the army, though most informants agreed he did not himself go out to fight. He claimed the sole right to make war and to declare war, but it is clear from early Europeans sources that private wars and raids did take place, and this effort to centralize and control all warfare appears to have been not wholly successful. The Paramount claimed the right to distribute all booty taken in wars, whether they were waged on behalf of the whole state or of a section of it. Through the exercise of this right he sought to suppress private warfare for private gain, but, according to Cibambo, he did not get all the booty taken, for the text mentions setting aside cattle for the Paramount.

If war was declared by the Paramount his village was the mobilization centre for the whole army. The sections of the army from the districts of the chiefs and the *amakanda* of the *alumuzana* assembled in the Paramount's village; there they danced *ligubo*, the war-dance; they went out from there to fight, and they returned there after fighting for the acclaiming of heroes and the distribution of the booty.

The Paramount worked through two leading office-bearers of the army. One was the big war *induna* whom he appointed and on whom lay the responsibility for planning the campaign and selecting the regiments for different tasks. It was he who bore the onus of ultimate success or failure. The other office-bearer whose activities the Paramount controlled closely was the chief 'doctor' of the army, the man who sometimes combined the role of diviner with that of administering 'medicines' to the army.

Finally the Paramount had the sole right of granting the head-ring to the men of a regiment who had served their time as warriors and were allowed to marry and settle down in their villages.

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defeated an alliance between the Arabs and the Bemba in which the allies intended to dominate all the territory between the Luangwa river and the lake-shore, driving the Ngoni from their highlands and opening all the country to the slave-trade. In the central kingdom, during the interregnum after Cikusi's death in 1891, a powerful Yao chief raided the kingdom, destroyed six villages and took many captives. In both kingdoms it was necessary for the Ngoni to defend their independence by constant vigilance and preparedness, especially against a combination of Arab slave-raiders and local tribes. Since large numbers of warriors were mobilized every year, these trained armies demanded an outlet, and the policy of aggression served the dual purpose of raiding enemy territory and maintaining a defence force.

There was a difference of opinion among informants about the results of raids in terms of spoils of war. In both kingdoms captives were taken in war, especially young men of military age and women. From tsetse-free areas where cattle were to be found, live beasts were brought to add to the herds in the Paramount's village and in those of the chiefs and *akamuzana*. Ivory for trading and cloth for wearing were two of the most valued forms of booty, and Cibambo mentioned the looting of clothes and weapons from those who had been killed. From accounts by the first Europeans, it is clear that the Ngoni burned the villages and killed the inhabitants in the majority of their later raids.

If defensive and aggressive military action and the acquisition of valued forms of wealth were two of the main objectives in war, a third was undoubtedly the need to build up a national sentiment within the military kingdoms by success in warfare in the first place, and by intensive training of all young men in the second, thus integrating the youth from conquered units with those who belonged to the trans-Zambesi clans. Again and again, in talking about their past, Ngoni informants from the Paramounts downwards emphasized the discipline and training of the young men in the days of warfare, and expressed their opinion that no other training could take its place. It was not only the common military training which contributed to this national sentiment and held the Ngoni together in a common purpose of preparedness for warfare. The *libuto* or age set within the *libandla* or territorial unit, and the *impi* or national army in which the territorial units were merged, provided a military organization which was adaptable and balanced, and which, through the control of the Paramount, gave the main impetus to centralization, while encouraging pride and initiative among local and age-set groups.

The relics of a military tradition

In north Nyasaland the Ngoni never fought against the Europeans, and were not coerced into giving up warfare, but, as a result of their contacts with the Livingstonia Mission, they finally agreed to give it up voluntarily. When Dr. Laws met the Commissioner near Mponda's at

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they acknowledged as rulers or direct sons of rulers. The other opposition came from the heads of the Swazi clans who saw their claims to recognition threatened by large numbers of these *makosana*. When such a person was announced a *mukamuzana* might comment to bystanders 'Who is this man? We do not know his father.' Then to save his face as well as that of the visitor, he would send a greeting to him and order beer to be supplied, while avoiding any elaborate form of entertainment. This subtle form of resistance to what were considered undue claims from lesser members of the royal clan was found everywhere.

In both kingdoms the Paramounts and chiefs, especially after 1933, appointed as officials for the kingdom and for the royal village, members of Swazi clans, but also, and increasingly, members of cis-Zambesi and local clans. This practice brought together in the royal villages and in the chiefs' villages men of the ruling aristocracy and men of the lesser clans, to share administrative responsibility, to assist on ceremonial occasions, and to take part on an equal footing in giving and receiving hospitality. This mingling on the official level was one of the reasons why marriages became more frequent between girls of Swazi clans and men of non-Swazi clans whose fathers had been promoted to official positions. The marriage of Paramount Gomani II's daughter to the son of his treasurer was an illustration of this. The daughters of families of Swazi clans were also sought in marriage by men of non-Swazi clans who, through their education, had got well-paid work in the Government or in commercial firms, and could therefore afford to give cattle for *lobola* for the girls. These were two instances of the type of marrying up which in the 1930's was lessening the sharp division in social life between Swazi and other clans. We shall see in Chapter IV, pp. 137, 140) that Ngoni fathers of daughters married to non-Swazi clansmen found a way of keeping their married daughters, as well as their sons, in their villages, particularly in the central kingdom.

Though the Ngoni clan system in the 1930's was, in Dr. Kuper's phrase, 'neither precise nor static', it was an integral part of Ngoni social organization. It was closely related on the one hand to the ruling aristocracy, and on the other to the social hierarchy. Both in the villages and in the national life of the kingdoms individuals belonging to Swazi clans played a leading part in social and ceremonial life, and carried on those distinctive Ngoni practices which their ancestors had brought with them from the south.

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households of her co-wives who were junior to her in the house, and the households of her sons' wives. These women also decided when to undertake certain work in cultivation or in harvesting crops, when to brew beer, when to re-polish the floors of huts and the sitting place in front of the huts, when to replenish the stock of cloth, ornaments and beads, baskets and mats, which were part of the wealth of the house. Other occasions for the exercise of authority were attending and superintending women's confinements and the private puberty rite of the girls, advising on matters of health, and supervising the training of children.

All these activities of the owners of the houses were so much part of the day-to-day life of a village that they could pass almost unnoticed unless a detailed analysis were made. The position and authority of owners of houses was, however, immediately evident on ceremonial occasions. These included the pre-marriage ceremony of *umxindo*, which was abandoned after the Europeans came; the series of visits and exchanges leading up to the marriage ceremony, *mtimba*; brewing beer on a number of occasions, for dancing *ngoma* and *ligubo*, for funerals and subsequent ritual shaving, or for entertaining important visitors whose coming was expected so that beer could be prepared in advance. On all such occasions, the courtyard surrounding the *indlunkulu* was a scene of great activity. Men put on their war-dance equipment there; the beer pots were assembled there; meat and blood for feasts were cooked there, while the less important maize porridge (*nsima*) was cooked in subordinate households. From the courtyard of the *indlunkulu* a procession of the *manina* (senior women) led by the owner of the house went out to greet visitors, to go to the beer drink, to take part in the dances, and to perform the ritual connected with births, deaths and marriages.

Marriage in Ngoni Society

Earlier in this chapter it was said that a new house derived from the marriage of a leading man to his big wife. Since marriage was so closely linked with the continuance and development of houses, and since a new wife when married separated from her own mother's house and became a member of her husband's mother's house, I have included a discussion of marriage in this chapter on houses.

There were three main principles in Ngoni marriage. It was a binding contract sealed by the exchange of cattle; it established succession in the male line; it formed a link between leading Swazi clans. When we examine in detail the organization of Ngoni marriage we see that its objectives were to build up a series of inter-clan and inter-family relationships. These began with inter-marriage between the leading Swazi clans, in order to strengthen the political and social relationships within that inner circle of Ngoni society. The political allegiance of leading individuals from clans of non-Swazi origin was strengthened by marriage

with men and women of Swazi clans. There were two Ngoni practices which could be regarded as directly contributing to marriage as a binding process within the society. One was the inheritance of widows by a man's brothers. No formal marriage ceremony took place and if the widow was elderly it was primarily a method of providing for her needs. If she was still capable of bearing children, however, this inheritance ensured that she would continue to produce offspring for the family she had married into, and that her relationship with that family would be maintained. Thus ties which appeared to have been broken by death could be re-established. There were two stages in the reintegration of his widows into a man's family and clan after his death. The first was the ceremony of widows 'seeing their brothers-in-law' after the mourning was at an end, when beer was brewed and they took off and burned their mourning caps. The second was the ceremony of being inherited, when the widows offered snuff to one of their husband's brothers whom they were willing to marry.

Another Ngoni practice was that of giving an *nhlanzi*, a substitute or additional wife. If, after a marriage had taken place and cattle had been handed over, the wife appeared to be barren, her family might give another daughter as *nhlanzi*, without further transfer of cattle, to bear children for her older sister whose house she entered. These children were always referred to as children of the house of A, the earlier married wife, even if they were borne by B, her *nhlanzi*. Sometimes, even if the first daughter given in marriage bore children, an *nhlanzi* might still be given without additional cattle being transferred, because the bride's family were pleased with her treatment in her husband's village and wished to compliment the man as a good husband.

There were four main stages in Ngoni marriage, in all of which the houses played an essential part. The first was the selection of partners and securing the consent of the families; the second the negotiations from the betrothal onwards, centring round the transfer of cattle; the third the series of feasts culminating in the marriage feast itself; and the fourth the assimilation of the new wife into her husband's family, house and village.

The selection of a marriage partner might take place in more than one way. There was direct courtship by the man; there was an indicated choice by the girl; there were marriages arranged by the parents; and there was direction of a son by his parents towards a suitable partner. In addition to clan exogamy and parallel cousin prohibition, there was in pre-European days a prohibition upon marriage between children of age mates in the same village. For girls of Swazi clans marriages were generally arranged, though informants insisted that in most cases the personal preferences of both partners were considered. A young man of a Swazi clan was told that in one village there was X, in another Y, with whom a suitable marriage might be made. Having taken this hint, and

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The three final acts of the *mtimba* were performed for the new wife by the women of her new village. The first took place about two days after the end of the main ceremony and was the occasion for her instruction by her husband's relatives. She sat on a mat by the *indlunkulu*, while the woman of that house dressed her *isihlutu*, anointed her with oil, and clothed her in fresh skins and new beads taken from the store of the house to which she now belonged. They then instructed her in her behaviour to old and young, telling her to avoid selfishness and quarrelling and to be friendly with everyone.

The second act, called *ukufumisa umlobokazi* ((bringing the wife out), took place thirty to forty days later, during which time the wife had been sitting by her hut being watched. All this time she had eaten only a little food, sent to her from her mother-in-law's hut, had been afraid to speak to anyone, and had wept often. Now she was told that she might go anywhere and talk with anyone. She could help her mother-in-law by fetching firewood and by lighting her fire. A pot of water was given to her and an axe to cut firewood, and her mother-in-law gave her the *indlekuza* bead, a sign that she might speak and eat in front of her parents-in-law. But her testing time was not yet over. She was told to fetch a huge bundle of split wood and to lay it down carefully before her mother-in-law's hut without dropping any. As the bundle was on her head, it meant kneeling down and bending forward slowly until she could gently ease the wood on to the ground. Other tests included stripping large quantities of maize, soaking them, and pounding them into stamped maize (*izinkobe*). This testing was called *ukulinga umlobokazi* (watching the new wife), and was in most cases far more exacting than anything she had been made to do in her own home.

The culminating act of the integration process, *ukupekisa umlobokazi*, in which the new wife's hut was recognized as the starting-point of a new house, was the ceremony of making fire in her new hut to cook food for her husband. Two or three months after the marriage, a woman from her father-in-law's *gogo* house suddenly appeared in the doorway of the new wife's hut, carrying three hearth-stones. She fetched fire, kindled it, and began to cook boiled maize. The astonished young wife was expected to cry because she had now been turned away from her mother-in-law's cooking-place, as if she were being put out of the house. The maize cooked on this first fire in the new hut was regarded as having been cooked by the bride, and was divided into portions, one being taken to each section of the village attached to a house. Meanwhile the young wife sat nearby, hanging her head and showing the conventional signs of grief. Nevertheless she was so excited that she went back to her own home as soon as possible to tell them the news. The response of her own people was to prepare food for a feast and bring it to her new village to express to her husband's people their appreciation of this token of confidence in the girl's ability to cook for her husband.

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182 585 621 The prolonged series of interviews, exchanges and ceremonies emphasized the Ngoni conception of the marriage contract and its binding nature. They also underlined the severance of the new wife from her former family and house, and her gradual assimilation into her mother-in-law's house. This relationship between Ngoni women within the houses provided an effective means of integrating them into a village to which they were strangers.

CHAPTER IV

NGONI FAMILY STRUCTURE

183 59 'The Ngoni have power and authority over their women and their children.' So began one of the texts on *cingoni*, 'the thing that is Ngoni', by a man of the Ntumba people whose grandfather had been born among the Ngoni when they were in Songea. There was a recognized ideal pattern of an Ngoni family which covered both the individuals included in the family group and the place where they lived. This pattern was patrilineal in descent, virilocal in residence, polygynous in marriage for all men of standing who were not Christians. Other recognized and often-mentioned characteristics were the continued residence of widows in their husband's village after his death, the grouping of families by houses, and the *laweni*, or dormitory system for boys and unmarried young men.

581 593 The young wife wept on the day of her marriage because she was leaving the security and known relationships of her own family for the hazards and uncertainty of entering as a stranger into her husband's family group. The dramatization of these sentiments in the protracted marriage ceremony, and the allusions in the *mtimba* songs, brought out clearly the continuity of the man's relations with all members of his family and the sudden sharp break in the woman's relationship when she married. When her first child was born, and a new individual family group launched, her final integration into her husband's family began. As a mother who had borne a grandchild to her husband's parents she had thenceforward a direct part in the relationships within her husband's family, but as a wife she was always a stranger. The marriage negotiations and ceremonial express the closeness of the family ties, showing on the girl's side the anxiety of her family on parting with her to live among strangers; and on the man's side the hesitancy of the husband's family at taking into their midst an unknown and untried stranger. In addition, the protracted exchanges of cattle and feasts, delaying the final ceremony and building up relationships between the two family groups, illustrate the Ngoni attitude towards marriage as a

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burned immediately after the burial on the banks of the stream where the living performed their ritual washing. Small children who were related to the dead took charcoal in their hands, and walked up to the grave backwards and threw the charcoal in without looking. Some leaders of the Swazi clans were buried on the edge of the kraal of the house to which they belonged, and the fence was enlarged to include the grave. The Ngoni comment on this place of burial was: 'If we make a grave, we make it outside the kraal, and afterwards build the kraal round that place so that cattle may walk over it and lie on it. Thus it may become flat as if it were nothing, for Ngoni people do not want a grave to be seen from the outside.' The women who were near relatives of the dead were allowed to mourn in the hut where the person had died, or they could if they chose take part in the war-songs and dances which were the only form of mourning allowed to the male relatives and to the men and women of the village who were not closely related to the dead person. The usual procedure was for a group of older women to wail and sob in the hut, but for all the rest, men and women, to mourn in the Ngoni way by taking part in war-dances and songs.

Much of this ritual appears to have had as its purpose to remove the fear of death from the living. That was the explanation of why the children threw charcoal in the grave—that they should not remember with fear the dead person being put in the earth. The obliteration of the grave site on the edge of the kraal had a dual purpose. One has been already referred to—that the grave should not be seen. The other was to identify the grave of a leading man or woman with the kraal site and the cattle herded there. If the village moved and a new kraal was set up, people would still say 'X was buried here', adding 'He was buried here when we were on Domwe—or in Songea', referring to an earlier site of the village. Placing the corpse facing south-east, and singing Ngoni war-songs which had come from the south, linked the newly dead with the ancestral dead, and emphasized the chain of communication between the living and the dead, which a new ancestral spirit could help to forge. It was establishing this means of communication which was the dominant note in the ritual of the funeral and in the post-burial rites.

When a death took place, the first action taken after the corpse had been prepared and wrapped in a skin was to send out a summons to come and mourn. We saw in the chapter on the Paramount that at his death the summons was in the formula 'The skies have fallen.' For others the announcement was: 'So and so has died. Come and mourn.' The obligation to mourn was binding. If relatives and fellow clansmen could not come at the time of the burial, or were away in the south, one of their first duties on returning to their home village was to go and mourn by the kraal where the dead person was buried. This was intended partly to show sympathy for the bereaved, but also to acknowledge and salute a new ancestral spirit, and to demonstrate the re-integration of

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the group of those living relatives who had performed or were about to perform certain rites for the newly dead.

These rites were the stages of mourning laid down in the Ngoni funeral ritual. They were stages in which all adults took part, and they fulfilled the need to build up the future links with the spirit who had joined the ancestors and to bring together in common acts those from whom death had removed one of their number. The following text by one of the leaders of a Swazi clan in the central kingdom puts together briefly the successive stages of shaving, drinking beer, eating meat, singing war-songs, ritual cleansing and widow inheritance, and bringing back the spirit.

¶ If a man died, the second day they shave; after 5 or 6 months they shave again and cook beer. This means the widows must take off their white *sitambo* (head bands). After 12 months they take off their black *sitambo* and kill a beast to praise the spirit so that he may return to his house. This is also the time for inheriting the widows.

When they take off the white *sitambo*, the brother of the one who died takes sheep dung and sprinkles it in the houses where the widows are sleeping. At the same time the men wash their hands with cattle dung. The meaning of this is to tell the widows to cook food for the brothers of the dead man to send to them when they sit by the kraal. This they do before they can see them.

From the ritual witnessed at many funeral ceremonies, which never altered in its main elements, and from discussions with Ngoni informants, it was possible to gain some idea of Ngoni beliefs about the relation between the living and the dead. It was clear that the attitude of the living towards the dead was one of respect and honour, but not predominantly one of avoidance and fear as among some of the neighbouring tribes. The post-burial ritual culminated in 'bringing back the spirit' to the village, and we shall examine this further in the last chapter of this section. An observer was always conscious of a sense that people were waiting for the return of the spirit, which had to be planned for and carried out by the living. During the interval between the death and bringing back the spirit, it was said to be 'in the bush'. When asked where in fact the spirit was, the answer was always 'We do not know. How can we know?' They admitted that the life of the spirits was unknown to them, and there was evidence of a slightly uneasy relationship during this interval of waiting. When the spirit had been brought back and was being guarded by some woman appointed for that purpose, then it was once more near to the living and their cattle, and it could be addressed correctly. In the absence of any clear concepts about life in a spirit world, the Ngoni clung to the ritual by which they believed they could establish and maintain contact of a safe and respectful nature between the living and the dead.

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121 233 in 1938.[1] The sociological and ritual significance of these factors will be the chief emphasis here, with reference to earlier chapters in this book on Ngoni culture and on the structure of Ngoni society.

233 554 565 In the sociological significance of cattle-ownership there are certain outstanding points to be emphasized, which will be indicated here and developed further in the analysis which follows. One is the connexion between cattle-ownership and status, illustrated by the dominance of the Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans in village life, since their possession of cattle was related to the kraal and to the siting of huts and to their house organization. The cattle horns on the roof of the *indlunkulu* were no trivial ornament. They were a proud assertion of cattle-ownership attached to the residences of the leading women, with all the implications of 'house herds' of cattle and of *lobola* given and received. Closely related to cattle-ownership and status was the power conferred by the possession of herds. The status of leading families was enhanced by the ability to give feasts, to give *lobola* for their sons' wives, to make sacrifices to the ancestors and, as we saw at the end of the last chapter, to realize cash by the sale of beasts belonging to the herd. Cattle-owners did at times have to decide whether to maintain and augment their herds and thereby be known as wealthy cattle-owning families; or to sell cattle in order to command labour to build a modern brick house, or to buy fine clothes for their wives and display their wealth in another form.

182 233 621 In the organization of Ngoni society, cattle were an important factor in uniting groups of persons. We have seen how the house, as a group of men and women, and its variant, the central Ngoni form of *banja*, had common possession of a herd of cattle which formed a source of wealth for all members of the house. Within the house the senior men were bound together by the responsibilities attached to the ownership and care of a herd. Within the village the senior men of a house or *banja* united in the upkeep of the kraal, the supervision of the herd-boys, the tending of sick cattle, and in meeting or resisting the Government's demands for culling or dipping stock. Where cattle were boarded out in another village, ties of association in the care of the beasts and in accountability for them bound together the cattle-owners or cattle-keepers of more than one village. A stage in the adjustment of a young wife to a strange village was reached when she added to the herd of the house she had married into the gift cattle given her by her father and so partly compensated for those which had been given to him by her husband's family. A new wife's standing in a village was thus advanced through any cattle which flowed in the opposite direction from those of the *lobola* cattle. Finally, and this is the main theme of this chapter, cattle were an essential link between the living and the dead.

[1] Read, M. *Native Standards of Living and African Culture Change*. Memorandum XVI of International African Institute, 1938.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5
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The relation of cattle-ownership to social integration, which was so marked a feature of Ngoni society, was limited to the Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans. There was evidence that the acquisition of herds by former captives and by the local Cewa and other tribes created conflicts within the society. The following statement was made by an Ntumba village headman, commenting on several court cases relating to cattle-ownership. The reference in the last sentence is to the Ngoni practice in the ownership of cattle.

'Sometimes people say "If your father was caught and was the slave of a certain person, and also if your mother was caught and was a slave of another man, then if you buy cattle and put them in the kraal of your father, those who caught your father say "These cattle are mine (or ours)." And those who caught your mother say "These cattle are ours." ' They all say so because it was they who caught your ancestors. So those cattle do not recognize their real owner. And sometimes those cattle do not bear well, and sometimes they just die.

Then perhaps you die and leave your cattle, and those people are quarrelling to find out who is the owner of those cattle, since there are three people who want those same cattle: your father, the one who caught your father, and the one who caught your mother.

And it is really best if there are many masters that you, a child, should not buy cattle, but just leave off because they are a source of trouble. But one who is a free man without any masters, he ought to buy cattle because there will be no trouble for him.

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Among the local Cewa tribes, when a man wanted to start a herd and had money to buy cattle, he was expected to give the money to his *malume* (mother's brother) who then bought the cattle and took charge of them and regarded them as his.[1] This assertion of ownership of cattle bought with another man's money was part of the services to which the mother's brother was entitled from his sister's children, in return for services which he had performed or would perform for them. If those relationships between a man and his *malume* were not working smoothly and the *malume* was not helping his nephew, there was a tendency for the man to turn to his own father and give him the money, and vest the ownership of the cattle in him, often because the father had paid the school fees or a court fine for his son. When the *malume* realized that his position had been usurped and that his chance of owning cattle had gone, his dislike of the man's father and his family showed itself in jealousy and quarrels between the two individuals and friction between the families. The Cewa matrilineal *mbumba* as a cattle-owning group under a senior man had not the continuity of the Ngoni house, for an *mbumba* was said to be 'finished' when a woman and all

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[1] The Cewa believed that if cattle were to survive and increase, they had to be owned and cared for by senior men. On the highlands round Dedza the Cewa had had cattle before the Ngoni came.

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by the stream and swept the ashes into the water. The beast for the sacrifice had been killed early in the morning before the shaving, and the ritual eating of the meat took place. This second shaving and sacrifice were to end the mourning period and to bring back the spirit to the village. A widow of Chief Njolomole I was appointed to guard the spirit and she kept in her hut the baskets which had been used for the sacrifice.

When asked whether this ritual of bringing back the spirit was followed for everyone who died away from home, the answer was 'No. It was done for this man because he was a big one and he was the son of a chief.' Only for members of leading Swazi clans and some others of trans-Zambesi origin was the ritual invariably followed of recalling the spirit to the village where he had lived and where the clan sacrifices were performed with the cattle of the man's house. The ritual ensured that a new ancestor spirit was recognized, that provision could be made for its guardianship, and that the spirit had been brought back to the village even though the man had died and been buried elsewhere. The ritual was based, not on the assumption that the spirit would be angry if not so treated and might injure his living descendants, but on the belief that absence had weakened the bonds between members of the clan and the house, and that the ritual associated with the making of an ancestor spirit gave an opportunity for strengthening these bonds. This was achieved by bringing together the living to commemorate the dead; by repeating once again the traditional pattern of speaking to the ancestors through the cattle; by giving the spirits their meat which the living shared; and by making sure that the spirit of the dead man would henceforth be taken care of by an appointed guardian.

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In the case of important people of the royal clan and chiefs, the second shaving was a preliminary to bringing back the spirit to be taken care of permanently and there were two stages to this last ritual in the making of an ancestral spirit. Three months after the death of Bambo Manga there was an elaborate ceremony of the second shaving which was accompanied by brewing vast amounts of beer. On this occasion there was an offering of beer, not meat, to the ancestral spirits. The ritual began with consulting the diviner first about whether the beer would be good. The diviner reported that two quarrelling women were spoiling it, and the quarrel would have to be resolved before the brewing would be successful. The diviner was also asked which spirit should be offered beer on this occasion, and answered that NaQwana, the mother of Mputa and grandmother of Bambo Manga, was the one to be addressed. The next act was making the ritual fire, since all the beer had to be cooked on newly made fires. Lopati Nzunga took the ritual fire-stick from Bambo Manga's hut, two young men kindled a fire outside and the women took grass from Bambo Manga's fence to build a fire. The women picked up bits of this fire to kindle their own new fires before brewing the beer.

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Military Service, obedience to the law,
recognition of the Paramount's supremacy were therefore 187
the main traditional forces uniting the mixed populations
in the kingdoms.

Ngoni society

Although all people living in the Ngoni kingdoms were 641
subjects of the Paramount, only those who could trace their
descent from families who crossed the Zambezi River were
recognized as 'true Ngoni'. Four main characteristics marked
off this true Ngoni group from the rest. The first was their [614]
clan name, giving them an authentic origin south of the
Zambezi. The second was a marriage contract sealed by [589]
handing over cattle, which established the offspring as
'children of their fathers', for, as they said, 'where the
children are, the cattle are not'. The third was patrilineal [611]
descent and inheritance through the male line, and patri- [428]
local residence at marriage, so that the wife came as a [591]
'stranger' to her husband's people and village. The fourth
was membership of a 'house', the social group of male [592]
members of Ngoni families with their wives and children
round a leading woman. Everyone was born into a 'house'
and the men remained in it for life, the women until their
marriage. For special reasons children could be adopted [597]
into another house than the one into which they were born.

In a few of the smaller villages of North Nyasaland, con- 621
sisting of ten to fifteen huts, all the men were true Ngoni, 184
descendants of one or more former warriors in the same
regiment, who had chosen to set up their own villages after [701]
the British had taken over the country. In such villages the
cultural pattern of Ngoni life could be seen clearly, but they
were not typical of the Ngoni kingdoms. There was always
a mixture of peoples in the larger villages, dominated by a [563]
group of true Ngoni families.

This group of true Ngoni families were the social and 186
cultural aristocracy of these villages. They considered them- 563
selves superior to and distinct from the other ethnic elements 621

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Africa. All males had to pay taxes to the government, at first in kind and later in cash, thus hastening the advent of a money economy. Most drastic of all the changes was the ban on warfare, which cut at the roots of Ngoni political organization, and at their system of training their young men.

In the Northern Ngoni kingdom, the Scottish Mission preceded the administration by more than twenty years, and were largely responsible for a peaceful take-over of the area. In the Central kingdom there was a brief war of resistance, in which the Ngoni armies were dispersed and the Paramount killed on his way to trial. In this area mission activity, under several missions, never achieved, especially in education, the ascendancy which the Scottish Mission achieved among the Ngoni in the North.

As one result of the cessation of warfare, and of school education leading to paid employment, there was an economic redistribution of wealth among the Ngoni. Formerly wealth had been associated with political power, and the Paramounts and their subordinate chiefs and heads of clans had command of large herds of cattle, received the spoils from wars and raids, and used the labour of conquered villages to cultivate the land. After the missions and government were established, men with schooling began to earn money as teachers, clerks and mechanics, and so to command financial resources which were not available to the traditional leaders. The young men responded to the labour recruitment which became a permanent feature in Nyasaland from the 1890s, and they went far afield to many types of work.

It was evident, just before World War II, that the Ngoni kingdoms had had a profound shock from which they never fully recovered, in spite of the recognition of their Paramount Chiefs by the Native Authorities Ordinance in 1934. The older men looked back with nostalgia to what they called 'the time of peace, when the Europeans were not here to trouble us'. These older men were known as 'the generation of former days', because they had taken part in warfare

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of this book, especially Chapters IV and V, will show how the organization of Ngoni society and the cultural way of living in it, necessarily surrounded the life of children and the training given to them with a much wider horizon. We shall talk about the family, the household, the village as the setting of Ngoni child life, but these terms have to be interpreted according to the Ngoni social organization, sketched very briefly in Chapter I and set out at length in my earlier book *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*. Looked at from another angle, we can see that a young child's horizon in Ngoni villages was limited at first to what he saw around him and the people who had daily or frequent contact with him and who understood and supplied his daily needs. But that circle of people forming a young child's contacts was from the beginning much wider than the individual family which a child was born into. When he began to run about and to pass beyond the restricted confines of the household, it was as we shall see, the duty and responsibility of all Ngoni adults to notice his behaviour and correct him when necessary.

The relationships inside the large Ngoni families, between one family and another in a Ngoni village, with related families in other villages, with all members of the same clan living in an area—these were threads in the web of kinship and clanship which united the Ngoni people. These threads were also inseparable from the political links between the people and their territorial chief, and between the whole people and the Paramount, the head of the kingdom. The difference, however, between the Ngoni kingdom under the Paramount which included all his subjects of Ngoni and non-Ngoni ethnic groups, and the Ngoni aristocracy in the villages was a profound difference. It was the latter who understood, appreciated and sought to hand on to their children Ngoni ways of living based on Ngoni values. Hence in most villages there were sharp distinctions between standards of behaviour within Ngoni families and in non-Ngoni families.

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All of them made their own axes, knobkerries and catapults for hunting. Some were interested in music and made shepherds' pipes, or one-stringed lyres, or hand pianos of metal strips affixed to a wooden base. They composed their own songs and airs for these instruments. Others showed ingenuity in making elaborate models of lorries and aeroplanes, or in carving heads of animals. Others liked to weave fibre into the wide-brimmed hats some herd-boys wore.

More significant still for their future social relationships, they began now to choose their own intimate friend and to form the friendship pacts which were characteristic of Ngoni society, and regarded by adults as important in the child's development. In the friendship pacts, especially those between boys, there was no implied or manifest restraint. They could have 'joking relations', and hence say outrageous things to each other. They could quarrel and make it up, and defy each other's wishes and decisions, without a final breach. The relationship between friends often lasted into later adult life, and was probably all the stronger for the occasional lapses and outbursts, and by the fact that in the daily companionship of friends the burden of observing 'respect' did not oppress them.

The boys' dormitory

The hut known as the boys' dormitory and the whole system of living which it represented was a traditional feature of Ngoni village life. In their culture it had three main purposes. Formerly, when as they said 'War was our school', it was the place where boys slept and lived together, and where they learned to defend themselves and to obey authority. It was in a sense the preparatory school for the regiment, and the herding of cattle was the basis of the curriculum. Once a boy went to sleep in a dormitory he never left it until he married, unless he was seriously ill. In the days of warfare, he learned in the dormitory and out herding the cattle, a knowledge of the bush and its wild life and of his fellows, and

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575 182 342 the qualities required in self-defence and in mutual aid which he would need when, at the age of eighteen or so, he was called up into the new regiment formed by the Paramount. Dormitory life was therefore rooted in the Ngoni past and though its original purpose and outcome had disappeared with the suppression of tribal wars, it was still part of the organization for herding cattle and was regarded as a necessary training ground for young manhood. In very large villages there was more than one dormitory, each placed in a section of the village surrounding a cattle kraal. Boys belonged to the dormitory of that section where their parents' household was situated. There were occasional attempts sponsored by certain missions to set up a separate dormitory for boys who were baptized Christians or in an inquirers' class. This kind of separation was greatly disliked by the Ngoni on the grounds that they did not want anything to divide their people. They regarded dormitory life as an important co-ordinating factor in their young peoples' development, and they did not want the tradition to be spoiled. They therefore opposed any sectionalizing of the dormitory system except on the geographical lines already mentioned, which allowed for the full operation of the two remaining purposes of the dormitory in Ngoni culture.

575 562 861 The first of these purposes was to remove boys, once they had their second teeth, from the influence of the women. Ngoni men were outspoken in condemning the effects of all women's influence on boys. They made a slight exception in favour of the mothers and grandmothers of high-ranking Ngoni clans. Non-Ngoni women they always suspected, and often rightly, of introducing youths and girls to ideas and practices which were contrary to Ngoni custom, particularly in connexion with sex and magic. It was partly a belief that dormitory life would 'Ngoni-ize' the boys and counteract non-Ngoni influences from whatever source that made them so unyielding about boys leaving the women's supervision at what they considered a crucial stage.

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88 | responsible for her, told her how to keep her legs together if
[864] she should sleep with a boy, and warned her against full intercourse and possible pregnancy. This warning was followed up with regular examination to see if the hymen was intact, carried out every two months or so by some senior woman of the girl's father's house.

When the simple ritual was over, the grandmother sent for the girl's father and told him what had taken place. He in turn told the male members of his house and the elders of the village. The news 'So and so's daughter is now mature' was received in the village with quiet rejoicing, and the father was congratulated as one who would in time receive cattle on his daughter's marriage.

881 In this ritual the seclusion, washing with cold water and facing south-east in the river were the only strictly ritual
● 182 acts. Equally important in Ngoni thinking however was the reassertion, at a critical time, of the authority of the women of her father's house over the girl. The girl was also made aware of her new status by being forbidden to perform certain daily functions in the presence of children and younger girls. Later we shall see how the first stages of courtship followed this event.

Boys' private ritual

881 The boys' ritual consisted of two distinct parts. At his first nocturnal emission the boy told one of his age-mates or his friend, who went and told one of the older boys in the dormitory. This older boy told him to go to the river very early in the morning and 'wash strongly', splashing the water all over him, and to do this after each emission. This act, called 'being beaten with water', the Ngoni believed was essential to strengthen the body and assist to control sexual impulse. There was great secrecy observed about this stage, only the boy and his friend and the older boy knowing about it. If other boys said to him 'You have now matured', he denied it vehemently.

THE THRESHOLD OF ADULTHOOD (1)

When the boy's voice began to break, and his father or another older man noticed it, the second part of the ritual took place. The father's brother went to a senior man famed in the village as a herbalist and obtained from him several kinds of roots. These were ground and then cooked either in milk or in the cud from a goat's stomach, usually the latter, for the father liked it to be known that he killed a goat for his son. If the mixture was cooked in milk, a fowl was killed, and in either case the boy was given the meat to eat immediately after the mixture to take away the extremely bitter taste. The cooking took place on a small fire by the kraal gate in the presence of the male members of the father's house. The boy was told to dip the tips of his fingers in the mixture as it was bubbling in the pan and to lick them quickly. He was not expected to show that he found the mixture very bitter as well as hot to touch. At intervals the boy had to jump over the fire, hitting his elbows and knees with the palms of his hands. The more often he did this, the less often did he have to dip in the pan because the mixture soon dried up, but he had to continue dipping and licking till there was no liquid left. The senior men watched intently all through this performance because they believed the mixture not only helped physical growth and muscular strength but would prevent impotence. When this ritual was performed for the heir of a chief, it was followed by a war-dance in the cattle kraal and the boy had to take a second dose of medicine in the kraal surrounded by the warriors. In such a case a bull was killed instead of the customary goat, and the contents of its stomach used for mixing the medicine. The meat was eaten by the boy and his father's relatives.

As in the case of the girls, this boy's ritual was an occasion for asserting the authority of the father and his kin over the boy. For him there was however no separating off into another group after this maturing. He continued to live in the dormitory, herd cattle, and go to school as before.

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Cewa

The significance of Ngoni puberty ritual

We now come back to the question of why the Ngoni held to this private ritual for girls and boys at puberty. There were three main reasons. The first was that each Ngoni child belonged to his or her father's house. At this sign of physical maturity, significant for the boy or girl, and for the society, the elders of the house asserted anew their authority over them, performed a brief traditional ritual, and watched during the ritual for evidence of the Ngoni personality traits of courage and physical endurance which they expected to see in young adults. The second reason was that the change at puberty was regarded as marking only one of the stages in the development of growing boys and girls. It is true it had more significance for girls, in that it set the mature girls apart as a separate group. But it was not the prelude to immediate marriage, as the girls' initiation school was among the neighbouring Cewa people; nor was it in old days the prelude for the boys joining the army. The third reason was that the Ngoni did not regard fertility as the major dominant factor in the development of young women, as it undoubtedly was considered among the Cewa. They greatly disliked the ritual and the significance of the Cewa female initiation rites and forbade Ngoni women to have any part in them. Potency among men, on the other hand, was recognized as important both for the individual and for the social group, and impotence, particularly in leading men, was kept secret and hidden from outside knowledge as far as possible. If an Ngoni woman after marriage did not bear children, it was not considered a stigma on her, either individually or socially. The common practice of marrying one of her sisters as a 'substitute', or the very common practice of adoption was resorted to. The latter was always referred to as 'putting a child into the house of So and so'.

One of the alleged objects of initiation schools among other ethnic groups was to instruct the young initiates in correct

returning from work in the south about every two years or so, even if it was only for temporary residence in the village, mitigated, though only to some extent, the social disintegration and upheaval caused by the absence of so many young men.

In pre-European days, girls waited to marry for five to ten years after attaining puberty. For high-born Ngoni girls a further 'pre-marriage' ceremony and ritual took place immediately before marriage. This was after the girl and young man accepted by her as a 'lover' had been courting for some time but before any formal betrothal took place which involved the approach of the two families through intermediaries, and the discussions about the transfer of cattle. The Ngoni said that this pre-marriage rite was the equivalent for the girls of taking the head-ring for the men, because when it was held it was a public declaration that marriage was now possible for the girl, and she was acknowledged as having reached adult, that is married women's, status.

This ceremony began by the senior women of the girl's home sending for her father and saying to him: 'This child is now grown up. She is ready to be prepared to enter the state of adulthood.' One of the Ngoni names for the ceremony meant—'staying in the hut as if fasting'—a ritual practice associated with rain-making by the Paramount, and with taking 'medicines' for strengthening a new Paramount or chief on his accession. The girl, with her companion, spent two or three days in a hut, hidden behind upright mats curved so that no one could see round them. They were naked except for a long soft leather cloak worn over one shoulder and tied under the right arm. During this seclusion they had food brought to them by the senior women of the girl's house. While the girls were hidden away the village women cooked quantities of meat and brewed beer to entertain friends and relatives of the girl's father. During the feasting and drinking the senior women, with the men, danced the special dances and sang the songs associated with this ritual. Some of

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of the emphases in training boys and girls. This was especially the case in the regulation of relations between the sexes, but new emphases were also needed in the knowledge and competence of young adults before setting up their own households. Boys and girls from this stage onwards were in fact in Ngoni culture thought of as young adults. They had passed out of childhood through the physical change at puberty, and though for a year or two that made little difference in their way of living, they were now regarded as in training for what lay ahead of them. For that training the senior members of their father's family still felt responsible and exercised control. But the emphasis in the training given was on what adults should know, how adults should behave, what adults should be able to do. For the rest of this chapter we shall follow up the new emphases in guiding and to some extent controlling relations between the sexes, and in the following chapter the emphases on cultural knowledge and on technical skills.

In the all-important sphere of heterosexual relations, there were certain social controls among the Ngoni which operated in the selection of a mate and in the form of courtship leading to marriage. Prohibited sex relations and prohibited marriages set up a pattern of avoidance between brothers and sisters, between parallel cousins, and between members of the same clan, and in former days the prohibition had extended also to the children of men of the same regiment. In selecting a mate the Ngoni preference was for someone in another village, for someone of an equal ranking or higher clan, and among Christian families for a young man or girl either already baptized or under instruction. This last preference, urged strongly by the missions and by Christian parents, was often difficult to reconcile with the preference for a high-ranking clan connexion. This was illustrated in the case of a young teacher, whose parents were Christians. He found himself being given contrary advice about choosing a wife. His father died, and his grandfather, an ex-

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warrior, was responsible for advising the youth. He indicated seven villages in which there were girls of good family whom he might go and have a look at. He urged him not to marry 'a girl who belonged to another nation', meaning another group, not Ngoni. He wanted him to marry one of several girls in a collateral branch of the royal clan, for whom the youth would have to give several head of cattle in the marriage transfer. The grandfather was quite prepared to sacrifice several of the cattle from his herd in order that the youth might make a good marriage. The young man's mother and his teachers in the mission wanted him to marry a Christian girl. In the time after harvest he went visiting with his agemates, and saw a girl he liked the look of at a wedding dance in another village. He was particularly attracted by this girl's quiet and dignified behaviour, and by the fact, discovered through a 'go-between', that she had been to school and could read and write. The girl was at that time not a baptized Christian but under instruction. She was also not of an Ngoni clan, but of one belonging to a neighbouring ethnic group. He pursued his inquiries and found that her parents had been brought up in an Ngoni village and 'knew Ngoni customs because as children they had grown in Ngoni hands'. He married this girl, greatly to the disappointment of his grandfather, who felt that if the father had been alive he might have been able to find possible choices for the boy which would have reconciled the Ngoni ideal of marriage to a high-ranking clan with a Christian background.

In pre-European days there had been a series of 'dynastic marriages' between the royal clan and the leading clans and the desire to link the aristocratic families in this way was very strong still. It was always alleged that the girl had the right to refuse a suitor if she did not like him. I found several cases however in which the girl's refusal had been overruled by the men of her father's house who desired a 'dynastic marriage'. In two of these cases the girl was finally carried off to her husband's village for the marriage ceremony after

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parallel of the Jews of the Old Testament preparing the way for the Christian era to illustrate and drive home their belief that they, the Ngoni, had prepared the way for the Christian Gospel in Nyasaland. 'Were we not also a people who hated idols and images? We too tried to reach the Great God through our ancestor spirits, but we failed, until the mission came to teach us.' 'We held together the people of this land under one rule so that the missionaries could travel safely and spread the Gospel teaching.' These beliefs were stated so often that they became almost standard formula, and the incongruity of this picture with some of the warlike situations recorded by the earliest missionaries was ignored and forgotten. In the churches, where the people sat on mats, Sunday by Sunday, facing their Ngoni ministers, rising to sing, in their typical Ngoni harmonies, Christian hymns set to former Ngoni war tunes—in this setting Ngoni history was brought home, interwoven with the new teaching, to young adults who formed the majority of the congregation. For Ngoni elders it was something more than a reminder of their past. It was setting the Ngoni people in a special relationship to the European missionaries and the new learning, compensating for the passing of military power and political supremacy by establishing Ngoni cultural superiority over their neighbours. This gave some spiritual reassurance to a people in the throes of political change, and it was a lesson which lost none of its significance for the young adults who heard it.

Ngoni law

'There was one law for all the people. No one could be ignorant of the law.' These were the words, quoted in Chapter I, which the Ngoni used frequently to describe the importance of law in their culture, its role in the political unification of their own and subject peoples, and the responsibility, laid on all adults, for knowledge of the law and conformity with its demands. An incident in a court of law, which was unforgettable to an anthropologist, was a case in which a chief sat

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302 washing they applied the fat to their hair and combed it out, de-kinking it now and then with strips of bamboo bound tightly to the head. They scented their hair with the juice of sweet-smelling leaves, and dressed it formerly in the high chignon. As they gave that up, they took to wearing headcloths of different-coloured cloth so arranged that [301] beadbands across the forehead could be worn. Ngoni girls needed no urging to take this beauty treatment very seriously, and before a big *ngoma* dance, gave it much time and thought.

554 Only the big wives and elder sisters of chiefs could wear
301 the necklace and headpiece of leopard or lion claws. They were the distinguishing mark of an Ngoni 'princess' or 'queen'.

The art of cleanliness

181 I have called this section an 'art' because the Ngoni took
356 an aesthetic pleasure in achieving and maintaining certain
515 standards in their homes and in their persons, which were held up to young adults as being highly desirable. This
● 182 emphasis on a particular kind of cleanliness, while putting up with much that was not clean in their surroundings, was only one of several inconsistencies in Ngoni culture. The appreciation of a desire for this kind of cleanliness had not [751] necessarily any connexion with hygienic cleanliness. It was more closely associated with the Ngoni love of orderliness and scrupulous attention to detail in the appearance of persons and places. It was also connected with what they regarded as comfort and good living. The effect of mission teaching about health and sanitation, and of government [177] courses held for chiefs to instruct them in modern welfare measures, often caused confusion among Ngoni elders. Sometimes their traditional standards of cleanliness coincided with modern hygienic standards, and sometimes they did not. In any case it was seldom that Europeans recognized that the Ngoni had any standards to begin with, and they

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generally assumed that everything was 'dirty' which was not hygienically clean. The Ngoni resented this, all the more because of their cultural insistence on decency and order, and on certain forms of external cleanliness.

Their huts, furniture and mats were often infested with ticks and bugs—neither of which the Ngoni liked, regarding them as rather disgusting. The old remedy was to leave the tick-infested site and burn the objects full of bugs. As villages became more stationary and property accumulated in the huts, and became more valuable and expensive, they built strangers' huts for visitors who might otherwise infect their own. Bugs were dealt with by bringing all bedding, mats and bedsteads out into the sun and pouring boiling water on them again and again.

Similarly it was an aesthetic disgust rather than hygiene which made them insist that there should be no spitting or nose-blowing on the floors of huts or verandas. Such actions had to take place outside, and vehement comments were made when a visitor forgot his manners in this way. An ingenious tiny iron spoon with a long handle was used by the older Ngoni for cleaning the ears and nose.

Perhaps nothing showed the Ngoni pleasure in and desire for cleanliness so clearly as the quick and apt excuses made when standards were obviously in temporary abeyance. There was no doubt that young men and girls liked looking clean and well-groomed. The daily wash in the river with soapy leaves, followed by rubbing on fat or oil made the skin glisten. We have talked already about the use of twigs as tooth-brushes, the rinsing of the mouth before and after meals, and the use of astringent fruit to make the mouth feel clean.

The same scrupulous attitude about cleanliness was seen in the washing of dishes, spoons and cooking-pots after each meal. It was almost as if the standard of housewifery was proclaimed by the sight of food baskets, gourds, spoons, etc., spread on the platform outside the hut to dry. Washing up

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181 577 828 [182] The four so-called personal values will be reflected in the Ngoni personality traits which we are going on to discuss. There are however two values which did not appear to fit into any integrated system, and which yet recurred as themes in Ngoni culture, and here and there in the ideas inherent in child training. One was the theme of childhood innocence, which was much deeper and more subtle than merely keeping children in ignorance of sexual life and intercourse. The other was the value set on the 'gentle' man. He was a man who appeared to be almost wholly self-controlled, able to have normal sexual intercourse with his wives but not always thinking about women, showing sternness but without anger, being just but also merciful. These were the qualities looked for in the man responsible for the guardianship of certain head villages where the ancestor cult was [769] carried on, and who was entrusted with the ritual associated [778] with the ancestor cult. In the more ancient ritual, such as carrying the sacred emblem before the armies, it was young boys, exemplifying the childhood innocence theme, who were entrusted with this charge. In the more modern contexts, [793] many of the outstanding Ngoni ministers in the church were recognized and revered as 'gentle' men.

The Ngoni ideal personality

577 Chapters IV and V, as well as Chapters VI and VII, showed that there were certain elements in the Ngoni ideal of what their children should be like which were common to young men and women, to boys and girls, while others were emphasized only for girls or for boys. Among the common traits we have already seen the outstanding emphasis on 'respect' in all forms of behaviour and in all kinds of contact with older people, and with others who should be 'honoured'. Part of this respect was shown in obedience, and with this obedience in all the detailed inter-personal relations with senior people was associated, in the individual's relations to society as a whole, being law-abiding and complying with Ngoni law.

information is insufficient for any reconstruction in great detail, but the general principles are clear and to some extent our conclusions can be checked by reference to material from other areas, particularly the nineteenth century accounts of the Ngoni of Northern Nyasaland and the Zulu. The account of present-day marriage is based on information collected in the field during 1946-9.[1]

The period of the 1890's is chosen for comparison with the present because of the catastrophic change in Ngoni life which occurred in 1898 when they were defeated by the British. Old people who were alive during the period are still available for questioning and many younger people have been told of those times by their parents and grandparents. Although Ngoni cannot generally remember beyond their grandparents, genealogies collected now yield some information about the 1890's and link that period to the present. Important social changes occurred in 1898, changes which for the greater part were, and still are, regretted by the Ngoni, and these accentuate the difference between time present and time past. The past is recollected and recounted and has a moral value. Children are taught the glories of the past to compensate them for the inadequacies of the present. The teaching of tribal history as a school subject reinforces this view. With the passage of time the past has been idealized and simplified but the picture is still clear enough for us to be able to distinguish probable fact from unlikely rationalization. Marriage in 'the time of peace', as the period prior to 1898 is called, is one aspect of this picture.

Marriage is one part of kinship, for it is by the twin processes of marriage and childbirth that the web of kinship is spun. For the purposes of our analysis we have had to sever marriage from its context in what may appear at times rather an arbitrary fashion. A society is a whole, if not always a well integrated whole, and no one part of it can be fully understood without a simultaneous knowledge of all its other parts. Societies persist, more or less, through time, and it is clear that we cannot hope to grasp the total significance of the working of a society at any one time without a knowledge of the changes or lack of change in that society both before and after. Yet we cannot marshal all these relationships simultaneously, let alone present them through the medium of words. Our attempt to comprehend the present cannot wait until we have full knowledge of the future, and our analysis of one sector of a system must proceed in advance of our synthesis of the whole. Ngoni society has persisted through the last sixty years rather less than more, and it may well be argued that present-day Ngoni society is poorly integrated. Nevertheless it is to be hoped that an analysis of Ngoni marriage may, on the one hand, demonstrate

[1] I made two visits to the Fort Jameson Ngoni while on the staff of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, spending in all a year and eight months there. I was assisted by my clerk, Mr. M. B. Lukhero, in inquiring into former conditions as well as observing contemporary social life.

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Succession to office within this system was from a man to his eldest son by his great wife. A man inherited from his father not only his father's dependents but also his father's political superiors. The segments of the system, although some of them had special names, could all be referred to by the name of the person in charge of each segment. The heir succeeded to the name of his father and to responsibility for the segment named after his father. New people came into the system in two ways: by birth and by capture. Captives were placed in the system by decree of the Paramount Chief and his regional governors. The function of marriage was, in this context, to locate children in the system unambiguously and uniquely.

Two systems of relationships set up ties which cut across the lines of the residential system. These were the military regimental system of age-sets and the bilateral kinship system. In this paper we shall be concerned only incidentally with the regimental system, in so far as it directly affected marriage. We are, however, concerned with the kinship system, and in particular with the relationship of husband and wife. By careful choice of wives for himself and his sons a man ensured that his own group of agnates was linked to many other agnatic groups by bonds of affinity and, in the next generation, of matrilateral kinship.

It is from this point of view that we can best approach the analysis of marriage as it was in 'the time of peace'. Marriage arrangements then worked in conjunction with the residential system which is now in decay and it is not surprising that the replacement of the old system by a new one has been accompanied by changes in the kinds of marriage entered into by Ngoni men and women.

2. *Fidelity and fertility*

The old Ngoni residential system had much in common with the Zulu and Swazi systems and there was much in common in the realm of marriage. Marriage involved a permanent transfer of the fertility of the woman to the man's group. The children of a man's wife fell entirely within his own segment of the system, so that political ties became coincident with lineage ties. But while marriage secured for a man legitimate descendents with whom to people his own segment, it also established ties of affection and obligation which cut across the cleavage lines of the residential system. A man and his affines were linked in a specific relationship, entailing definite rights in division in the marriage, validated by the transfer of cattle and made permanent by the birth of children. The rites of marriage affirmed the transfer of the woman's fertility, the agnatic affiliation of her children, and the rights and obligations of affines towards one another. This pattern is common to many peoples organized patrilineally. Nevertheless, some of the characteristics of highly developed agnatic systems, such as ghost marriage, the marriage of wives by a woman, and the marriage of a queen with cattle contributed by the whole nation, were not found among the Ngoni.

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from the recollections of informants and the accounts of contemporary writers. Even in a society as rapidly expanding as was the Ngoni before 1898, the majority of the population at any one time consists of people who are politically unimportant. What were remembered and what was recorded at the time were the marriages of leaders and their close relatives. It is they, more than others, who were distinctively Ngoni, and it was by their actions that the values of Ngoni society were emphasized and developed. Their marriages were important in maintaining tribal solidarity and it is the system exemplified in these marriages that we have been describing. But the recent captives, the poor, the unsuccessful warriors, the junior sons of junior sons, they also married and their marriages were at least as numerous as those of their more fortunate brethren, despite the large bands of wives acquired by successful men.

The data in our sample provide suggestions as to both the relative frequency of marriage without payment and the kind of relationship that held between payment and status of spouse. The eight cattle were offered by one of Mpezeni's senior lieutenants as bridewealth for the daughter of a man of Nsenga origin. Two junior sons of this lieutenant each offered a beast as legalization payment for a wife, one of whom was the daughter of a divisional head. A legalization payment of unknown magnitude was made in a marriage between a village headman and a daughter of another of Mpezeni's senior lieutenants. These four marriages we may regard as important marriages between people of high status accompanied by marriage payments which usually were substantial. Among persons of low status we find that in six out of the seven marriages in which no payment was made, one or both of the spouses had been captured. Intermediately we have the remaining two marriages in which the legalization payment was made and the one in which 'snuff-box' was paid, all involving people of low or middle status and accompanied by relatively small payments, namely a chicken, some cloth, and tobacco. This positive correlation between status and payment holds for thirteen out of the fourteen marriages, but one marriage without payment was between one of the same junior sons of the lieutenant and the daughter of a man of Kalanga origin.

From such evidence as there is, it seems probable that marriages between people of high status were usually accompanied by substantial payments. At the same time, many of the marriages of people of low status and some of the unimportant marriages of men of high status took place without payments. What proportion of the total these marriages accounted for we cannot now ever hope to know. However since they amount to half of our pre-1898 sample it seems probable that they constituted a considerable fraction of all the marriages contracted at that time.

The payment of 'snuff-box' and bridewealth were the crucial events establishing a marriage, but there were a number of other transfers of beer and cattle, and a number of ceremo[illegible]ithout

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which the marriage lacked substance. We may look on these rites as fulfilling two social functions. Firstly they affirmed the position of the bride as wife of her husband, and secondly they emphasized the role of her parents as parents-in-law. In all the ceremonies of marriage the man and his wife were supported by members of their own groups, but we do not know exactly who these supporters were. They may have been agnatic kin, maternal kin, neighbours, or political superiors. From what we know of modern marriage it is likely that the composition of these groups of supporters was never rigidly determined.

The beginning of the marriage was announced at a ceremony which we may refer to as the gall bladder rite. It was held in the man's village and, after a beast had been killed, the bride was anointed with its gall and intestinal fat.[14] Another rite, which took place up to a year later, was held when the bride cooked food for her husband for the first time.[15] Before this ceremony she relied for her food on the man's other wives or his mother or grandmother. If the marriage was a successful one, that is, if the woman had borne live children and the husband was treating her well, the woman's parents showed their appreciation of their son-in-law by sending him, from time to time, presents of beer.[16] The son-in-law, or his father, rewarded the women who brought the beer with a present of meat. Later, the wife's parents brewed beer for the son-in-law and called him to their village so that he might formally enter his wife's mother's hut.[17] Later still, a ceremony was held at which the man and his wife's mother ate together.[18] At these rites of entering into the mother-in-law's hut or eating with her, a beast was sometimes killed by the father-in-law for the benefit of the man.

4. Relationship to affines

Apart from the specific ceremonial obligations there were continuing obligations of hospitality and assistance between the two groups. There was always visiting between them, and indeed

[14] This ceremony is called *lusiwa*, a word said to be of Zulu origin whose meaning I have been unable to trace. Informants were unable to say what it meant. The gall bladder is called *nyongo*, from the Zulu *inyongo*. Rattray, op. cit. pp. 40 and 114, and Scott, *A cyclopaedic dictionary of the Mang'anja language spoken in British Central Africa*, p. 486, both translate the Nyanja word *nyongo* as spleen, but from Rattray's description of a marriage ceremony it seems that a gall bladder must have also been in use among the Ngoni of Southern Nyasaland.

[15] *Mphekiso*. Cf. the Zulu *uku-phekisa*, to help or make to cook. Weise, op. cit. 'Expediçao . . .', pp. 473-4, and 'Geschichte . . .', p. 192 describes what seems to be a similar ceremony, which he says took place a few days after marriage.

[16] All offerings of beer which are carried from one place to another, to a son-in-law or to a headman or chief, are called *vipoko*. Cf. Zulu *uku-pheka*, to cook.

[17] Called *mngeniso*. Cf. Zulu *uku-ngenisa*, to enter another person's hut.

[18] Called either *msyelano*, from the Zulu *uku-dlana*, or *kulyelana*, from the Nsenga *ku-lyelana*, both verbs meaning 'to eat together'.

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band one or more of his lieutenants and other dependent families. Thus the band of wives formed the core round which the sub-segments of the husband's residential segment were built up. Each band was associated with a distinct cluster of huts, although not every cluster of huts had a band of wives living in it. The division of wives into bands was only one of the processes by which the segmentation of clusters was carried on.

Each linked co-wife lived in the band of her barren senior although occasionally a linked co-wife was promoted and made head of her own band. The children of a linked co-wife were spoken of as being born in the house of her senior, but here the word 'house' (*ng'anda*) was used only in a figurative sense.[21] Where it was necessary to contrast the children of the wives of one band with the children of another, they were called the children of the head of the band. Less frequently all a man's children by his several wives were referred to as the children of the house of his great wife.

It seems that more trouble was taken to obtain a linked co-wife for a barren great wife or head of a band than for a junior wife. A great wife needed children to ratify her position in the hierarchy of co-wives, and to establish a line of descendents senior to the lines springing from her subordinates. Barrenness was the principal reason for seeking a linked co-wife but it is said that if a man had pleased his wife's father, a linked co-wife might be given spontaneously by his father-in-law as a mark of his esteem. When a wife grew old and needed domestic help a linked co-wife was sometimes given to her although she might have borne many children. A man was under an obligation to offer one beast[22] to his wife's father when he received a linked co-wife.

The children of a linked co-wife ranked immediately after the children by her senior, if there were any. They inherited the property allocated to her hut and belonged to the segment founded by her.

7. The levirate

The custom of linking co-wives was sometimes a kind of sororal polygyny and sometimes a variety of sororate. We may see it as a device for establishing and maintaining the residential segment potentially founded by the senior co-wife when she married her husband. Similarly we may look on the levirate as a way of ensuring that the fertility of the woman still remained attached to that same segment even after the death of her husband. A widow lived in leviratic marriage with her husband's younger brother who became

[21] Compare the similar use of the word 'house' among the Zulu and 'room' among the Tallensi. Cf. Hoernlé, 'Social organization' in *The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa*, p. 78, and Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, pp. 198 sqq.

[22] Called variously *mceka* or *mtoso*. *Mceka* is an Nsenga word meaning a small cloth worn round the waist by women. The allusion is to the labour pains felt by the mother of the new bride which were eased by binding her waist with a cloth. *Mtoso* has the same meaning in the old Ngoni language.

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made with the approval of the dead man's kin. Although by this arrangement the woman was for a while removed from her allotted place in the system, the *status quo ante* was restored with the return of the children to their pater's kinsmen.

8. Segmentation

The primary cleavage among a man's children was between the children of one band and the children of another. Within a band, the division was into separate 'houses'. Where there were children of more than one mother in the same 'house', that is where the senior wife as well as the linked wife had borne children or where there was more than one fertile linked co-wife with the same senior, the division was between the groups of full siblings. These lines of cleavage were expressed spatially by the arrangements of the huts belonging to each segment. At the top of the political hierarchy, the arrangement of the Paramount Chief's queens determined the major divisions into which the nation was split residentially, with a senior queen in charge of each major royal village, and lesser queens in charge of politically dependent royal villages. At the bottom, the man with two or three wives saw his sons group themselves round their mothers while retaining a common allegience to him.

Thus we see that in 'the time of peace' marriage was tied to a clear-cut residential system based on patrilineal descent and virilocal residence, modified by political status deriving ultimately from the Paramount Chief. The position of males in this system was determinate, although not unalterable. By the processes of marriage males were supplied with legitimate offspring. Although descent and succession were traced through males, the pattern of segmentation of this patrilineal system was determined by the organization of wives. The relative status of co-wives was perpetuated in the relationship between the segments which sprang from them.

In this system the elementary family of man, wife, and children did not emerge as an important grouping. In all serious enterprises a person derived support from his male agnates, and it was to the organized kin that the fertility of the woman was transferred by the payment of bridewealth. By the time a man had advanced in status sufficiently to be head of a division or a village, he had acquired many dependants who were not true kinsmen and his wives had been divided into bands. With the recently captured families, these considerations did not apply with quite the same force, for there were many poor men who had only one wife. These people depended on their political superior for cattle, and the women were to some extent under the control of his great wife, in so far as agricultural work and beer brewing were concerned. Even the rearing of children once they had been weaned was carried on outside the elementary family. Children were sent to their grandmother's house to be trained and indoctrinated with Ngoni values. The recent captives

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came. Others followed maternal links or were attracted to the district messengers, the newly-created political agents of the White Administration. About 1912 the Administration adopted a policy of decreasing the number of distinct villages and effected amalgamations between villages which had nothing at all in common except spatial proximity. Later still, from about 1920 onwards, new immigrants began to enter the area from the surrounding Cewa tribe in the face of alienation of land to Whites.

These villages became the basic local administrative units. Men were identified in terms of their tribe, their chief, and their village. To this extent the new village inherited the political functions of the old. But men, instead of being fixed in their allegiance, moved from village to village seeking good land for their gardens and freedom from quarrels. The proliferation of villages was to some extent controlled by the Administration, so that if a man quarrelled with his elder brother he could no longer easily set up a village of his own. Instead he sought refuge with his maternal or affinal kin, registered himself in their village, and became for some purposes at least subordinate to the headman of that village. A man's political position was determined by where he had decided to live, whereas under the old system he had had to live where he belonged politically. The whole nature of affinal and maternal ties shifted so that in some instances they became more important than the ties of paternal kinship.

2. Rival tribes

The values of Ngoni life were in the old days held in conscious opposition to those of the tribes with whom they fought. All the later captives came from matrilineal uxorilocal tribes, who made only token transfers at marriage, and who married at an earlier age than did the military Ngoni. They did not take so severe a view of adultery, and for girls copulation at puberty was obligatory. Captives who had been brought up in this tradition were in the old days forcibly required to adopt the Ngoni way of life, and indeed it seems likely that to some extent they did so willingly as part of the process by which they transferred themselves in allegiance from one group to the other. After 1898 the central government of the Ngoni lost much of its power and it was no longer able to enforce conformity to Ngoni standards. Ngoni marriage payments had been made in cattle, and the looting of cattle made it more difficult to maintain these payments. The example provided by the adjacent Cewa chiefdoms reinforced the tendency to depart from the modes of behaviour of the past. Furthermore, groups of Cewa entered Ngoni country after 1898, as we have already noted, and these people had never been indoctrinated with Ngoni beliefs and values. In addition, many individuals followed their captured relatives and joined them where they were living in Ngoni country. To-day some villages, although under Ngoni chiefs, have matrilineal succession, dance

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a faithful woman whose husband stays away many years does not bear children, but they do not condone infidelity. The prolonged absence of men which leads to this unsatisfactory situation is seen as part of the disruption of the old order by the coming of the Whites. It is they who are responsible, both for the lack of children in marriages where the woman is faithful and for the occurrence of adultery in marriages where she is not. The virtue of bearing children and the virtue of fidelity are values in conflict and the Ngoni see only one solution, the ending of labour migration. This conflict appears with particular force when a man goes away leaving his wife pregnant. This action is in itself hazardous, for the man will not be there at the time of birth to confess his adultery, yet men do go away knowing their wives are pregnant. If a live child is born, it must be protected by the rite of 'taking up the child'.[19] If this is neglected the child may die, and it is in the interests therefore of the man's relatives as well as the woman's that it should be performed. The only consistent line of action is to ensure that the medicines which can be used as a substitute for the rite are available to the woman. These medicines are expensive, and relatives may be reluctant to find the money for them, particularly as the whole procedure is under the ban of the missions. The only other solution is for the woman to take a lover with whom she performs the rite. If they are caught, the excuse that they were sleeping together merely for 'taking up the child' is not accepted. Here the same conflict and the same attitude are seen as when a woman has an impotent husband.[20] To achieve a desirable end the woman must commit adultery; but woe betide her if she is caught in the act.

There is an important difference between the way in which the kinsfolk act at the level of village discussion and their behaviour later when matters are referred to the court. In the village they are fairly free to act without reference to the absent husband. They can give advice and can attempt to enforce mutually agreed damage payments of chicken, acting in the light of their opinion of what is in their own interest and in the general interest of their kinsman. They cannot deal in this way with divorce or with large damages for adultery. These matters must be referred to the court and here much more deliberate attention is paid to the wishes of the absent man. If a case of adultery is brought by the man's kin, the court enquires about the wishes of the husband in the matter. The husband's kin must produce a letter from him authorizing them to proceed against his wife and he must say in the letter whether he wishes to divorce her or merely to claim damages for adultery. The case is usually adjourned for three to six months while this is done. A woman who pleads for divorce on the ground of her husband's desertion is similarly told to write to him informing him

[19] See above, pp. 45f.
[20] See above, p. 34.

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easily. Paramount Chief Mpezeni III, in a Christmas broadcast in 1948, addressed to Ngoni workers in the towns, said

> Think not that I divorce your wives merely when they come to court. I do so when I see you send no money or clothes or you stay away for more than five years, not writing or sending anything to your families. I do this when they come to see me, both she and your parents. You do no good to your families by forgetting them all when you are in a strange country.

The grounds on which divorce is granted are more or less the same in the court and the village, but although the court, like the village assembly, thinks of itself as being primarily concerned with 'teaching people to live well together', it is also, unlike the village, concerned with reinforcing the power of the Native Authority bureaucracy and upholding the authority of the chiefs. Hence the court gives greater weight to the formalities of marriage and the theoretical rights inhering in the different payments. The chiefs, councillors, assessors, clerks, and police who make up the court are all men, whereas in the village meeting old and important women give their views and they are listened to with attention. My impression is that women are less favoured in the courts than they are in the village.

The law that the legalization payment shall be not less than thirty shillings was agreed to at a meeting of chiefs and their supporters in about 1944. Informants said that the law was introduced so that women as well as men could be punished for their adultery. It was argued that in a marriage in which no bridewealth had been paid, and only a few shillings as the legalization payment, the woman's kin could not in equity be called upon to pay damages on her behalf to her husband when she committed adultery. Adultery was thought to have increased, and women were as much to blame as men. By making the legalization payment a considerable amount, equal at the time to two months wages, it became possible to punish the woman in the same way as her lover. As we have seen, not everyone keeps this law, and women are married with a smaller amount as legalization payment, or with no payment at all. It is held by some people that a marriage certificate will not be issued unless at least thirty shillings legalization payment has been handed over, but in fact it is still possible to get a certificate when some smaller sum has been paid. In the light of developments in other tribes of the Eastern Province, it seems likely that before long thirty shillings legalization payment will become necessary before a certificate can be obtained.

One copy of the certificate is given to the man and another to the woman. With the help of her certificate, and of letters from her husband showing he is calling her to join him, a woman can get a pass from the court allowing her to buy a ticket on the bus going to the railway line or to Nyasaland. These certificates have therefore considerable value, and one woman's pass may be used by another

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varying success in their other aims. The number of people with dozens of wives has decreased to zero, but this has been due to the operation of other factors as well as pressure from the missions. Whether the incidence of polygyny as a whole, that is the ratio of monogamist to polygynist men, has decreased is difficult to assess, since genealogical information is incomplete on barren wives and the wives of men whose descendants are now scattered. The fact that only six per cent of widows are inherited is due to the general change in the nature of marriage, the decline in the incidence of bridewealth, and the changed significance of residence, as well as to Christian endeavour. In these matters the general flow of events has been on the side of the missions. The same cannot be said for premarital copulation and for the ritual of 'taking up the child'. Censure from the mission is an additional hazard to be avoided in premarital intercourse, but it has not prevented it. In their opposition to the belief in *mdulo* and the ritual intercourse which follows as a consequence of the belief, the missions are aided by the teaching of hygiene and Western science in the schools, but there is no support from indigenous values. In this matter it is difficult to establish any trend, but the way in which attitudes are changing towards traditional mystical sanctions seems to be that the operation of the sanction is still believed in, but that the techniques for counteracting the sanction have been added to, so that the powerful medicines of Western civilization, particularly the sulphonamides, can be used to counteract the machinations of sorcerers. It does not seem likely that the belief in *mdulo* will disappear easily.

Thus in the system of values sustaining marriage, we find that there is some inconsistency. The teaching of the missions, the values associated with the old Ngoni way of life, and those deriving from the matrilineal tribes of the region conflict with one another on some points and support each other at others. The situations of the present day provide for considerable freedom of choice within these conflicting traditions, so that in one situation a man may adhere to the mission teaching in condemning the bigamy of another man in his village, and in another situation take part in the marriage negotiations for an additional wife for his chief, in accordance with the old Ngoni system of values. A man condones the secret lovers of his unmarried daughter, but when she becomes pregnant brings them to court with the approval of the mission.

6. *The transfer of rights*

The rights transferred from one group to the other by marriage payments in the old system were clearly defined. By the payment of 'snuff-box' the man's patrilineal kin group acquired rights *in uxorem*[4] in the woman, and by the bridewealth they acquired rights *in genetricem*.[4] If the woman committed adultery after 'snuff-box'

[4] I have taken these terms from the interesting paper by Mrs. Bohannan on 'Dahomean marriage: a revaluation', *Africa*, xix (1949), p. 278 to indicate rights in a woman as wife and as mother respectively.

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to the kin of the married couple however much the kin may intervene in the marriage and act on behalf of the couple.

The belief in the occurrence of such diseases as *mdulo* and *lugola* supports the values of Ngoni society, and acts as a check on behaviour which is wrong in Ngoni eyes. Beliefs in the efficacy of medicines do not have such a straightforward moral connotation, for in theory it is as easy for a man to harm the wife of someone else by the use of medicines, or for a woman to harm her co-wife, as it is for a man to harm his cuckold. Medicines can, therefore, be used for good or ill, depending on the intentions of those who manipulate them. Even the possibility of anti-social manipulation of medicines can, however, have a positive effect, as we have seen in the way in which a wife is encouraged to live demurely without attracting the attention of other men, lest when she spurns their advances they retaliate with medicines to harm her in childbirth. Old people like to maintain that in 'the time of peace' the Ngoni did not use medicines at all, although from what we know of the Zulu and other South-Eastern Bantu tribes from which the Ngoni came, this is almost certainly untrue. 'Our spears were our medicines', they say, meaning that when the state was powerful both internally and in relation to their neighbours, law and order and the wishes of the Paramount Chief could be enforced by physical sanctions. Only now, when the chieftainship has lost so much of its former power and men and women can do wrong without fear of punishment in the courts, is it necessary to fall back on mystical processes in an attempt to control other people's behaviour. By contrast the mystical diseases which can only be caught through socially disapproved actions operated at both stages of Ngoni history, although *mdulo* itself, unlike *lugola* and other similar conditions, appears to have been introduced by the Cewa.[4]

To a lesser extent the fear of venereal disease may be said to act as a stabilizing factor, since men admit that they are cautious in running after women on farms, in Fort Jameson and away in the big towns, because they fear syphilis. In the village an infected woman, if she cannot conceal her condition, is shunned by careful men, and a newcomer to the village who starts to flirt with her may be taken aside by an older man and warned of the risk of infection. It is an actionable offence for one partner in a marriage to transmit venereal disease to the other. Venereal disease is, however, commonly believed to be widespread and the fear of it cannot be said to be an efficient deterrent of adultery.

Despite the mystical safeguards and despite the fairly well defined rights *in uxorem*, marriage is not regarded as a permanent bond. There is a maxim 'Never confide in your wife, for tomorrow you may divorce her.' Consanguinity is permanent and unchangeable and a man should confide in a brother rather than in his wife.

[4] *Cf.* Read, op. cit. 'The moral code . . .', p. 7.

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The Fort Jameson Ngoni[3] are at this stage of transition. Many men and some women can read, if not write, and we can no longer call the tribe non-literate. Yet a society of this kind behaves in many ways as if it were non-literate. In particular, information about the past is transmitted orally and laws and customs are not committed to writing. In this paper I shall discuss some of the ways in which this information is manipulated. I shall distinguish between tales of fighting, relating to the period 1821–1898, which we may regard as tribal legends of origin; beliefs about customary behaviour relating to the same period; private legends which serve to explain the form of relations between present-day groups; and lastly history proper, documents describing contemporary events, if such exist.

Early travellers all speak of the various Ngoni groups as fierce warrior tribes interested only in destruction and plunder. With the spread of European control Ngoni raids ceased. Today in villages inhabited mainly by women and children, with scraggy animals and eroded gardens, the traveller looking for signs of a military tradition sees only khaki greatcoats and battle-dress. Among the Fort Jameson group, if not elsewhere, the great cowhide shields, and the regiments which carried them, have disappeared. Yet the battles of the past are still remembered and are called to mind in songs sung at drunken parties, in tales told to children and, importunately, to sympathetic strangers. Many of these songs are in the old Ngoni language now largely forgotten, and singers cannot give any precise meaning to the songs they sing. They are the relics of the past learnt parrot-fashion and in the context in which they are sung they do not require any specific reference. In our own culture we do not need to know who were the April rainers before we can sing "Green grow the rushes, O". Prose tales, however, are in ordinary speech and describe military exploits of people known to the speaker, or preparations for raiding ordered by the Paramount Chief and carried out by his lieutenants. The most frequently recounted battle of all is the fight between Ngoni and British troops in 1898. Many men and women are still alive who remember the fighting or even took part in it. The cataclysmic changes which followed the Ngoni defeat and the unusual weapons used combine to make the battle memorable. It is the only admitted defeat, for all other tales tell only of victory. The Ngoni defeated the Bemba, Wisa, Cewa, Kunda, and so on.

We know from contemporary travellers' accounts that though on the whole the Ngoni were successful against their neighbours, their run of successes was not unbroken. There is evidence that on occasion even the Cewa raided the Ngoni and took captives. We may regard the form taken by these legends as due in part to the process found in most cultures by which victories are remembered and defeats forgotten. But the distortion introduced is not only the elimination of defeat. The Administration and the Missions have,

3. I worked among these people during 1946–49 while on the staff of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.

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that the defeat of 1898 is important. Although they claim to have conquered all their African neighbours, Ngoni do not claim success over the British. Instead, defeat at the hands of the British is cited in explanation of every present-day failure and of every departure from traditional practice. Ngoni say, "If we had not been defeated we would not have lost our land and we would not now go hungry"; and "If we had not been defeated the tribes would not have been mixed up and we could follow our customs properly", and so on. In the past, captives taken by the Ngoni were rapidly indoctrinated with Ngoni ways and themselves became proud Ngoni; Ngoni complain that now, although captured by Europeans, they never become Europeans.

The general legends of the past from which these notions are derived are common knowledge. In the main they are passed on orally and are maintained by the teaching of tribal history in schools, the appeals to old military traditions, when recruiting for the Northern Rhodesia Regiment, the conversations of planters comparing one tribe with another as labourers, by the reports of administrators and by the writings of ethnologists.

The link between the Ngoni of today and their illustrious forebears is also symbolized in the office of the Paramount Chief. He bears the name of his warrior great-grandfather, and the formal aspects of his relationship to his people are explained by reference to his ancestors' achievements. He cannot attend funerals or take part in some of his own marriage ceremonies because "he has already conquered all others"; he cannot be expected to walk through the bush with the District Officer because "he has already conquered the whole world". He basks in his great-grandfather's invincibility, for in this context the defeat of 1898 is forgotten. The relationship between the Paramount Chief and his eleven minor chiefs is partly determined by the distribution of power in different branches of the royal lineage before the European conquest, and the division of the country into these minor chiefdoms is a visible reminder of that distribution.

Associated with these tales of military exploits and royal power are myths about former customs. Ngoni say that in the old days they used to hunt, or marry, or build villages, in a particular way and that now they do differently. Frequently when I asked what happened in such-and-such a situation I would be told what my informant thought would have happened before 1898 rather than what he had seen happen now. Thus if we ask what payments do Ngoni make in marriage we are told that there are two payments, "snuff-box" and bridewealth, consisting of one or more beasts. Further inquiry reveals that these payments are now made only infrequently and that the period referred to is before 1898. More detailed investigation suggests that in many pre-1898 marriages they were not made and that when they were made they did not always consist of beasts. Ngoni do not deny these facts but they do deny their relevance. To them the distinctively Ngoni way of marrying is with these two payments, and it is this process alone which merits the vernacular adjective—*cingoni*. They regret that people no longer marry in this way and

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blame the Europeans for it; but it remains part of the distinctive cultural heritage of the tribe.

As we might expect, notions of this kind do not provide sanctioned standards of conduct nor ideal patterns towards which Ngoni strive. They may be used to explain or justify a state of affairs, as we have seen, but they do not directly determine action. An individual who departs from traditional custom, in these terms, is not necessarily censured. Indeed, men who are knowledgeable about the glorious past do not follow traditional ways any more than do less-well-informed people. According to tradition the Ngoni are a virilocal people, yet if a man goes to live with his wife's relatives his own kinsfolk cannot force him to return by appeal to this virilocal tradition. Traditionally a man avoids his mother-in-law. Yet I once saw an aristocratic man, a great authority on traditional history, on leave from work sitting on a verandah chatting with his mother-in-law. I said to him, "I thought a man should avoid his mother-in-law." He laughed and replied, "Yes, so he should. This behaviour is disgusting, and as soon as I come to live here permanently I shall see that customs are properly followed."

In certain situations the Fort Jameson Ngoni appear as a tribe in contrast to other tribes. The tribe is an administrative unit, with its own chiefs, its own area and sometimes its own District Officer. Representatives from each tribe in the region sit together to form the Native Urban Court and the Provincial Advisory Council. The Ngoni representatives on these bodies tend to present distinctively Ngoni views to contrast with the views of their colleagues. Thus there may be a discussion on wills. There is an Ngoni view, a Cewa view, and so on. The Ngoni representative repeats the old story about bridewealth, virilocal residence, the rights of the eldest son, and these are recorded as being the Ngoni custom in the matter. Even when discussing such an apparently modern issue as wills, the tendency is to go back to this mythical past. It is in terms of this past, in reality as well as in myth, that Ngoni are different from their neighbours. In the present, as contrasted with Europeans, Ngoni and Cewa are much the same. Ngoni pay bridewealth in the same way as the English eat roast beef. It is a national characteristic, but one located in the minds of men rather than observable in their actions or their aspirations. Instead of the scarifications and totemic observances which distinguish their neighbours, Ngoni express their tribal identity by having distinctive customs which, conveniently, need not be followed.

In the Native Urban Court a similar process appears to operate, but here, unlike at the Advisory Council, there is a greater need to come to grips with real situations which require action, and tribal distinctiveness is tempered with practical reality. In the purely Ngoni Native Courts appeals are made to traditional practice in a different way. The courts are required by the Administration to follow tribal custom and people know that the courts are bound in this way. In fact, however, the courts have continually to deal with new situations and to make decisions which are unprecedented. This is done

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under the guise of drawing attention to some good Ngoni custom which has been neglected. Thus, for example, a man came to court saying that he was always quarrelling with his wife and that he wished to divorce her. The bench granted the divorce and awarded the woman 30s. damages. The litigant protested. The junior member of the bench, a man aged about 25 years, said, "Don't you know, it has always been the custom in this court to award 30s. damages against men who divorce their wives?" Yet this was a comparatively recent practice and the litigant's protest seemed, to me, to be quite justified. The young man had been on the bench only about eighteen months. Even without Administrative stimulus, deliberate acts of legislation are not unknown among the Ngoni, but they require considerable discussion and probably a tribal meeting. It is easier, particularly for a court member as junior as the man in question, to appeal to the unwritten corpus of tribal custom when introducing a new rule. An analogous process in our own society is perhaps concealed under the fiction that judges do not make law. Ngoni do not quote specific precedents in court, and in this undocumented environment new decisions, if they are not soon challenged, become part of what has always been the custom since time immemorial.

We may then summarize by saying that their common store of notions about the past provides Ngoni with a means of distinguishing themselves from similar groups at a time when the cultural distinctions between these groups are in fact becoming less and less. In the Courts, appeals to the value of traditional custom are made to gain acceptance for new rulings, while in ordinary life breaches of custom are widespread and are not censured.

When we consider legends associated with particular groups within he tribe the picture is rather different. Separate groups in the population remember, and sometimes act in the light of, particular incidents in the past which link them to other similar groups. Thus village A is linked with village B because of some incident in the past when the erstwhile leader of A captured the leader of B, or because at one time the leaders of A and B were brothers. These incidents, and the present inter-group relations with which they are associated, are not known universally but only by the groups concerned and by those near them. Yet in many ways these incidents are of greater practical significance than the more widely known tribal history. The relationships to which they give rise, or rather such of these relationships as have persisted, are remembered at funerals, in the formal exchanges of beer, and in the settlement of quarrels. There are at first glance no sanctions to maintain relationships of this kind, and indeed the very separate existence of two villages A and B may be due to a quarrel followed by a split. But although, for example, when an old woman dies in A there is no way of directly forcing a messenger to carry the news to B, there is in fact a greal deal of social pressure on both groups to keep alive the connection between them. This arises from the general responsibility placed on everyone to preserve the peace, that is, to preserve the existing social order intact. If there are

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quarrels in a village the headman is blamed by the chief for not controlling his people well. All disputes are best settled out of court, even if they must be referred to court later on. Therefore a quarrel in village A brings to light all the alliances and cleavages which link A with other villages and differentiate it from them. The headman of A appeals to B for support, invoking the historical incident linking them, and hopes to settle affairs of his village with the authority of B's approval behind him. For if the headman of B is a potential ally he is also a potential rival, and the dissident section in A may themselves invoke their link with B and transfer their allegiance to him. Thus although the details of the relationship between A and B, and the historical incident connected with it, may not be widely known there is considerable external pressure on them to maintain their relationship. Connexions of this kind, mainly between villages, but also between chiefdoms, play a large part in contemporary Ngoni life. Men walk twenty miles to a funeral and women carry pots of beer all day in response to ties of this kind.

Thus we see, on the one hand, that tribal legends are widely known, relate to pre-conquest times, and do not directly influence conduct; and, on the other, that legends associated with inter-group relations are known only by the groups concerned, may relate to either before or after 1898, and do directly influence action. Why is there this difference? We may regard the former legends as of significance mainly in external relations and the latter in internal. Within the tribe, and more particularly within the minor chiefdom, inter-group relations are still largely determined by Ngoni themselves, however much they may have altered in form and content since 1898 and however much Ngoni are part of a wide system. Movement between villages is only slightly controlled by the Administration and in quarrelling, in marriage and adultery, beer-drinking and hoeing, Ngoni men and women choose their own allies and enemies. Incidents in reality give rise to inter-group relations and are subsequently invoked to maintain them. History is written not in books but in the names of groups and in the remembered connexions between them, and as these connexions gradually change so local legendary history is gradually rewritten.

In external relations the Ngoni never act as a tribe except within the framework of European-controlled institutions. As yet no myth of origin is needed to explain the fact that Ngoni and Cewa representatives sit together on the Provincial Council save that the Administration put them there. The world of external relations is one of cultural heterogeneity and comparative adequate documentation. In this field legends have only a limited social function. They differentiate tribe X from tribe Y but do not relate them to each other.

Lastly we must consider Ngoni history proper. There have been many alleged accounts of Ngoni history published in Europe and South Africa, but these seem to have had little influence on the Fort Jameson Ngoni. Recently several histories have appeared in the vernacular, and tribal history

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is now a subject taught in the primary schools. All these are based on the recollections of old Ngoni men and women more than on contemporary documents, of which there are very few. We must therefore regard them as written legends rather than proper histories. Differences between one version and another are sometimes related to the different political affiliations of these providing the information.[6] The period from 1821 to 1898 is treated in detail and the remaining fifty years dismissed in a few lines. It seems likely therefore that in time the tribal legend will be ossified, or that at least there will be one version widely known. Yet the vernacular texts are written in the school language (Nyanja) which is not yet the ordinary village speech (Nsenga), and are learned largely parrot-fashion, sometimes even with unintelligible words included. It remains to be seen how much of what is learnt under these conditions is carried over into life outside the classroom.

With the increasing documentation of modern life we might well hope that the period of legend alone will end and Ngoni history proper will begin. Unfortunately this is not so. Although it is fairly easy to find out from contemporary documents what went on in tribal affairs from 1890 to 1898, with the imposition of British rule a curtain descended. Official reports grow shorter and shorter with the years for there was less and less to record. Towards the end of the British South Africa Company's rule the published information on Ngoni life was little more than the annual statement, covering the whole of Northern Rhodesia, that "the conduct of the natives has been satisfactory". From the beginning of Colonial Office control in 1924 reports have lengthened, but these have dealt with the history not of the Ngoni tribe but of the Eastern Province and of Northern Rhodesia. These larger regions have become the significant units of government, not individual tribes and chiefdoms. The Fort Jameson Ngoni have become more and more closely integrated with the wider society and less and less have any history of their own. When the Ngoni were making history they lacked means to record it; now that means are available they have no history to record.

Thus we see that in this transitional society internal and external relations, as well as the level of technical skill, influence both the way in which people relate themselves to their past and also the timing and content of their written history.

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6. Read and Winterbottom have pointed out that informants from Northern Nyasaland assert that their Paramount Chief is the heir of Zwangondaba, while those from Fort Jameson say that their Chief is the heir. Cf. Read, *Tradition and Prestige*, p. 467, and Winterbottom, *Outline Histories*, p. 17.

178 it might almost be called nation-building. And when you have heard
829 the Ngoni Paramount discuss the position of minorities in his country, and his claim to territories no longer under his rule, you could almost imagine you were in the corridors of the League Secretariat at Geneva.

The Ngoni state, however, to-day is not only a political structure, a framework for political and social life. Within that structure, forming parts of it, are institutions embodying those social, political, economic, and ethical values which are peculiarly Ngoni. The Ngoni, that is to say, when they absorbed other peoples into their state, imposed upon them a new social order together with the values inherent in that order. Patrilineal succession and inheritance, for example, introduced by the Ngoni, was bound up with the relations of father to son, the acquiring and distribution of cattle, the worship of clan and family ancestors. Each institution had its clearly related rules and values, and these are made explicit by the Ngoni when they describe them. The casual European observer in the country sees only the Paramount Chief and his subordinate chiefs ruling over a welter of tribes with a confusing mixture of social behaviour. To the Ngoni, however, and to the anthropologist who follows their lead, the pattern of society which they set up is clear and definite; it has a cultural reality of its own. The seeming welter of tribes is in reality an ordered relationship. Each group, tribe, or clan, has its recognized place *vis-à-vis* other groups. Within that ordered relationship the different groups have pursued a process of preserving some customs and adopting others, and they can give a coherent account of what they have retained and what they have borrowed. The real Ngoni do not admit to borrowing much. They like to think of their society as very distinctive as well as being well integrated. Yet the degree of modification in Ngoni society needs very close investigation because it shows much variety in different localities.

121 When they entered their present areas the Ngoni were very inferior
648 in numbers to the indigenous people. How was it then that they were
[161] able to subdue them? And having subdued them, how did they pre-

[304] mark' of the Ngoni as various forms of tattooing were of other tribes. Ear-
[186] piercing was sometimes forced (i.e. upon captives taken in war), sometimes voluntary. To-day children of local clans are teased by children of Ngoni clans and called 'Chewa' if they have not had their ears pierced, and they beg their mothers to take them to the 'doctor' to be 'made Ngoni'.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

Ngoni understand and speak it. It is in fact one of the distinguishing marks between the true Ngoni and the rest. It is convenient for a chief to be able to exchange a few remarks with a relative or an important visitor in a language which the onlookers cannot follow, and I have also heard a chief do the same with one of his *indunas* during a case in court. When I played Zulu records on my gramophone the aristocrats and old warriors drew near to listen, while the nobodies who could not understand fell back naturally. It is interesting to see how this language test brings out the social distinctions based on family and rank, and produces generally an inferiority reaction among the non-Ngoni.

As other distinguishing institutions the Ngoni point out their dances[1] and songs; their former military organization with its related system of age grades; their political organization under the Paramount Chief with his hierarchy of *amakosana*, *abalumuzana*, *izinduna*, *amanxusa*, &c.; the system of courts, again a hierarchy, with the laws administered in them; their village organization which still preserves the division into *izigawa* or hamlets, characteristic of the very big Ngoni villages of old days; the Ngoni code of ethics, differing radically from the code of the neighbouring tribes, with its insistence on truth, chastity, and personal discipline; and their patrilineal descent in clans and inheritance of property. This last, superimposed upon the local matrilineal and matrilocal tribes, has created a variety of forms of marriage and inheritance which is almost the despair of the field worker. The Ngoni say proudly, 'We taught them to honour their sons' when pointing out how nephew succession has to a large extent given way before filial succession. The values inherent in certain Ngoni institutions have spread beyond their own areas, for one Chewa Paramount Chief told me he had for long admired the Ngoni system of filial succession and inheritance, and was now trying, in the teeth of much opposition, to introduce it into his country.

After I had been a little while among the Ngoni, and their chiefs and leading men had begun to realize my aim in field work, I was surprised by the help they gave me and the amount of co-operation they showed in my enquiries. Then one day an old *induna* revealed

[1] One Ngoni Paramount has prohibited any but Ngoni dances to be danced in his country.

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history in order to prove their unity with the true Ngoni. It is nevertheless recognized that the aristocrats, through their kinship links with the past, have the best knowledge; the rest listen and defer to them. For matters relating to history are no antiquarian interest to the Ngoni. It is probable that recalling history and dwelling on the great days of the past is to some extent a compensation for what the Ngoni consider the indignities of their position to-day. Yet it is also a stimulus to them to maintain their separate identity and to revere their institutions. Tradition supports rank, by recognizing the historical importance of certain clans; and rank preserves tradition because intimate knowledge is the proud monopoly of certain families.

V. TRADITION AND LEGEND AS DOCUMENTATION. To the anthropologist who examines the part played by tradition and legend in the culture of a people, Professor Malinowski has given an invaluable lead. He suggests that myths are the charter and documentation for traditional tribal life, 'statements of reality which live in the institutions and pursuits of the people';[1] and that legend is re-interpreted history. All peoples of whatever level of civilization interpret history in the light of their beliefs about themselves, their achievements, and their destiny. The Ngoni are no exception to this. Sometimes they relate factual history which is verifiable and accurate. At other times it is probably part fact, part fiction. Yet at all times the emphasis in, and interpretation of, tradition, has a definite purpose, and it is possible to see how a standardized form of a narrative has come to be accepted and believed in. The version of a narrative at one time was interpreted or moulded to serve a purpose. Having been established, it then moulds the thinking of the people on that particular issue. The vexed question of the supremacy of the two Paramounts, Mpezeni and Mwambera[2] is a case in point. The basis of the story of the original dispute is the same, but the versions as told in each 'country' differ in a succession of minute details, whose arrangement and emphasis prove the point in each case. Mpezeni's historians have arranged the details to prove that he is the rightful *inkosi*; Mwambera's historians

[1] B. Malinowski. Article on Culture in *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*.

[2] The two Paramounts at present holding these titles are grandsons of the first holders, to whom I refer as old Mpezeni.

hitherto been the chief sanction for Ngoni supremacy. With their invincibility gone, the regiments broke up and the Ngoni military prestige was at an end. At the same time the direction of political affairs and the relations between the different tribes was assumed by a superior power. Ngoni political ascendancy and their control of economic organization was also at an end. The subject races of the Ngoni who had hitherto either been conquered or submitted voluntarily to the Ngoni had now an ally who was stronger than their former masters.

3. The new situation forced the Ngoni to make drastic readjustments. They had to readjust themselves to new relations with other tribes, and at the same time to the Europeans. In their contact with the Chewa and other subject tribes they could no longer maintain the social exclusiveness which had marked the distinction between Ngoni and slaves. There was therefore less actual resistance to culture fusion, though the dislike of adopting alien customs persisted. This dislike of alien customs was evident to some extent also in white contacts. The missionaries brought a new religion, western education, and western medicine. Other Europeans introduced land reserves, taxation, and working for wages. To the local tribes the European represented security as well as certain material benefits. To the Ngoni these material benefits appeared less welcome in the face of their defeat. There was therefore a psychological conflict set up among the Ngoni —a malaise due to their military and political downfall, together with their determination to preserve certain elements in their own culture. That psychological conflict is evident everywhere to-day, and finds expression in all conversations which turn on the relations of the Ngoni to other tribes or to Europeans. To the persistence of that conflict is due the strength of Ngoni 'national feeling', which has directed the selective process by which some of their political, legal, and social institutions have survived the results of culture contact.

4. Conditions all over Africa are changing and new forms of social and political organization are emerging due to the contact of the Africans with European civilization. What place has the Ngoni state in this emergent African society? Are there still cultural realities in Ngoni society which should be preserved, and can the Ngoni political structure be galvanized into new life through the medium of Indirect

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national basis to include all the adolescent males in the tribe, whatever their origin. Women were grouped into corresponding regiments. This system broke down after the first World War, when so many young men went away in the fighting. To-day the great exodus is not to war but to work, to the mines of Southern Rhodesia and elsewhere, and the incidence of labour migration is so high that it is not unknown to find a village in which there is no adult male resident. Part of the exodus is seasonal, and many men and women, as well as children, find employment on the tobacco farms of the district and in Fort Jameson Township.

II

The staple crop is maize, of which enough is grown to provide in good years for a small surplus for sale to the tobacco farms and the Administration. Tobacco is not grown by Africans for sale, except within the villages, but vegetables and a little rice and finger millet are sold to Europeans. Cattle are kept in the fly-free areas, and play an important but diminishing part in social life as the means of paying bridewealth, but the sale of cattle is not at present a regular affair. Their principal use is as a form of capital investment that can be called up to meet damages and fines awarded by the Courts.

The population of the tribe is about 60,000, the majority living in the Ngoni and Msandile Reserves, both near to Fort /5/ Jameson. The remainder live on the tobacco farms or in Fort Jameson Township. Villages vary in size from settlements of three or four huts to large clusters containing up to 500 people. The average size of a village is about thirty huts with a population of 100.

The Ngoni conquerors reckoned descent in the male line, while most of the people whom they conquered and with whom they married traced descent through the mother. To-day for practical purposes, descent is omnilateral, in that any connection through a male or female ancestor can be made use of as the occasion demands.